U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center
Annual Dairy Operations Report
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Herd Statistics

Herd Inventory			
Milking cows		300	
Dry cows		35	
average cow age	45 months		
percent first lactation	46%		
percent second lactation	21%		
percent third lactation	14%		
percent greater than third	17%		
Herd replacements		320	
Total		***655***	
Herd Performance			
Cows calved		366	
Heifer calves born	177 live	12	dead
Bull calves born	188 live	23	dead
Heifer calves died < 1 year old		2	(1.13%)
DHIA rolling herd average			
milk		19,908	lbs.
protein		728	lbs.
fat		621	lbs.
Milk sold in 1995		6,225,278	lbs.
Heifer calves sold		14	
Bull calves sold		188	
Cows sold		143	
Cows culled for:			
reproduction problems		42	
poor production		21	
poor udder		19	
poor feet and legs		18	
mastitis		12	
injury		5	
other		13	
Cattle sales revenue		$69,200.00	
Herd Reproduction			
Average days open		114	
Average calving interval		12.75	months
Average services per conception		2.5	
Average age at first calving		25	months

Although 1995 was a good year overall at the farm, progress with the herd in terms of growth and performance was not as good as it has been in past years. Probably the largest contribution to this slowed performance was the extended hot weather of the 1995 summer. Similar to the associated heat stress problems faced by nearly all midwest herds, our herd suffered considerable setbacks in milk production and reproductive performance.

Overall culling from the herd, especially that which was due to failed reproductive performance, was high in 1995. Consequently, herd numbers have not grown as much as in previous years and the average age of our milking herd has decreased to 45 months. Forty-six percent of the cows in the present milking herd are first calf heifers. This compares to 38 percent a year ago. On a strong note, our heifer crop looks very nice, have especially good udders and are producing very well.

Herd reproductive performance suffered during the hot summer. Normally 30 to 40 cows calve in our herd each month. Because of hot summer heat, we have only 15 to 20 cows due to calve in April and May, respectively. Recovery from the heat stress did not occur until October and resulted in 64 animals due to calve in August 1996.

Declining cull cattle prices and extremely low bull calf prices in 1995 caused our cattle sales revenue to fall short of projections. It was not uncommon to receive less than ten dollars for a small bull calf that would have brought sixty dollars a year ago.

The economic climate dictated continued emphasis on farm cost reductions and overall streamlining of the operation while continuing the necessary research support. Numerous activities were reevaluated, modified or discontinued to facilitate a reduction of one full time employee in the dairy operation. In 1995, twelve dairy nutrition experiments were conducted which involved more than 350 cows.

Continued emphasis is being placed on expanding the milking herd to 320 cows. In late summer a concrete feed pad, manure handling ramp, fence line feeding system and a cattle mound were added near our hay storage building which had been previously modified for cattle housing. This facility can now house 70 to 80 animals in the winter as well as provide feed bunk space for summer pasture supplementation.

A significant management change made in 1995 was the implementation of a tail docking program for the herd. The tails of all USDFRC cattle were removed to promote cow and facility cleanliness and ultimately produce a cleaner product. We have been very satisfied with this measure and are seeing a modest decline in somatic cell counts and cases of mastitis. We have also found that tail docking has reduced our bedding material and labor costs significantly. Continued efforts have been made to improve cow comfort as well. During the summer, misters were installed near the feed bunks in the free stall barn to facilitate cattle cooling. Currently we are in the process of modifying the free stalls by relocating the dividers and neck rails and by opening the stall fronts to provide more air flow and lunge space for the cows.

A milk cooling project is underway at the farm. A consortium of Wisconsin power companies, Dairy Equipment Company and the University of Wisconsin Milking Laboratory are working together to evaluate an energy saving system for milk cooling. Well water is used in the first stage of a plate cooler to cool the milk before being used for drinking water by the herd. In addition, a glycol solution cooled by outdoor ambient temperature is used in a second stage of the plate cooler. During the winter, milk enters the bulk tank at 41 degrees which eliminates the need for the bulk tank compressors. We expect this project to significantly cut our milk cooling costs and provide valuable information to dairy producers in cool climates.

I am happy to announce that in 1995 one of our cows was classified as excellent by the Holstein Association. She is number 2818, DFR Brass Bell Caterina. She is a four year old sired by Schutzs Brass Bell. Her breakdown is E E V V E - 90.

Special thanks to the entire farm staff for their dedication and hard work during these more challenging economic times. Special thanks also to our research staff for their understanding and willingness to cooperate as much as possible to minimize overall farm costs.